
By Staff Reports

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August 28, 2016 12:01AM

County's disaster preparedness app available

Local public safety officials encourage residents to protect themselves and their loved ones before, during and after a disaster by using a new smartphone app created through the San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services (County OES) in partnership with QuickSeries Publishing.

The new app, Ready SB, provides residents with multiple resources that will assist them in preparing for a disaster and is now available as a free download from the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store and can immediately help residents prepare themselves for emergencies.

For more information on emergency preparedness visit sbcfire.org.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160828/NEWS/160829690>

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By [Shea Johnson](#)[Print Page](#)

August 26, 2016 9:17AM

Private mental health staff doubles in county jails

SAN BERNARDINO — A new deal struck with Liberty Healthcare Corporation doubles the number of private staff providing mental health services in county jails and results in more than \$14 million in extra costs. Officials say, however, it won't result in net costs to the county.

On Tuesday, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to OK an amended contract with Liberty, effective Aug. 23, "for comprehensive mental health and programming services in the County's correctional facilities."

The green light will increase the existing contract from \$3 million to \$17.2 million and extend the agreement from one year to a three-year term, according to a county staff report. There are also two one-year options.

The amended deal will add 12.75 more staff members to the current 13 in order to implement the expanded services to be provided by Liberty. The largest increases are for psychiatrists (previously 2, now 6.75) and master's level clinicians (previously 7, now 12).

"In an ongoing effort between the Sheriff and (county Department of Behavioral Health) to ensure the quality and effectiveness of mental health services being provided to the County's inmates," the staff report said, "the Departments mutually recommend that Liberty assume a greater responsibility for correctional mental health care while inmates are in custody."

The county DBH will continue to provide transitional care services for inmates after they're released, according to the report.

The newly created position of sheriff's supervising correctional nurse will be expected to evaluate the effectiveness of mental health care provided by Liberty.

Supervisors first approved a contract with Liberty in January before significantly expanding the deal this week.

It's not the first initiative the county has undertaken to bolster mental health services for inmates. Last year, it expanded a program that treats San Bernardino and Los Angeles county inmates within West Valley Detention Center walls who are deemed incompetent to stand trial, a move seen as a solution to overcrowding at state hospitals. That contract with the California Department of State Hospitals was extended May 3.

Meanwhile, the recently approved Liberty ramp-up will not result in a net cost to the county, officials say. For this fiscal year, it will require an additional \$5 million in funding. The sheriff's department's budget maintains nearly \$3 million for correctional mental health services funded by Assembly Bill 109. The remaining appropriation will be funded by Mental Health Realignment revenue received by DBH.

In future years, required appropriation includes \$6.4 million in 2017 and \$3.5 million in 2018, the report shows.

Shea Johnson may be reached at 760-955-5368 or SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@DP_Shea](#).



An inmate in 2007 at West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga. File photo: Daily Press.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160826/NEWS/160829750>

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Regulators all wet on Cadiz project

Saturday, August 27, 2016



It has been a long, costly, frustrating road for the Cadiz Water Project — and now the trip has gotten even stranger. The project has already had to navigate burdensome, byzantine regulations at the state and federal levels and a number of legal challenges.

Now it can add a government employee insider trading scandal to the list.

According to a Wall Street Journal exposé, Cadiz Inc. obtained a chain of emails through a Freedom of Information Act that revealed that a U.S. Bureau of Land Management employee provided non-public

information to a short-seller, including a one-day advanced notice of a BLM decision that would keep the project from going forward. Cadiz's stock plummeted 65 percent within a week of the decision.

The scandal comes after the company has already run a gauntlet of regulatory hurdles and lawsuits that have caused years of delays and cost the company well over \$20 million.

The project would provide 50,000 acre-feet of water — enough to supply roughly 400,000 people — each year by capturing groundwater on the company's private property in the Mojave Desert and transporting it via a 43-mile pipeline, which would be buried along the Arizona & California Railroad's right-of-way. "All of the water pumped by the project will otherwise evaporate and the conservation of this water will cause no adverse environmental impacts," Cadiz explained in a press release.

Indeed, the company conducted exhaustive environmental studies and put together a 6,000-page Environmental Impact Report to satisfy California Environmental Quality Act requirements and prove that there would be no significant environmental impacts. The Santa Margarita Water District and San Bernardino County both agreed and signed off on the project in 2012, and the project prevailed in eight subsequent lawsuits and settled one other.

In 2011, the Interior Department suddenly reversed a previous ruling from 2009 and disapproved the project's use of the railroad right-of-way for the pipeline. Then, in October, the BLM rendered its negative ruling. However, since the ruling is not a "final decision," it cannot be appealed, and Sen. Diane Feinstein, the only real legislative opponent to the project, has attached riders to every Interior Department appropriations bill since 2008 barring the government from spending money to review the project.

In short, the regulatory and legislative gamesmanship has placed the Cadiz Water Project in a Catch-22 purgatory. Fortunately, a rider to this year's appropriations bill would override Feinstein's anti-Cadiz policy. The bill has passed the House and differences with the Senate version will be hashed out next month. Let us hope that the pro-Cadiz version survives so that Californians can gain a significant and stable new water source.

The Cadiz case highlights just how burdensome and irrational state and federal environmental policies have become. "Anywhere but California, this water would have been delivered decades ago," Cadiz President and CEO Scott Slater told us earlier this year.

Politicians pay a lot of lip service to the need for finding new water sources and storage, particularly during this extended California drought. Now it is time to walk the walk and finally approve the Cadiz Water Project.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/opinion/20160827/regulators-all-wet-on-cadiz-project>

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Heavy rains from thunderstorms collapse road in Needles, bring 86 mph winds

By Alex Groves, The Press-Enterprise

Saturday, August 27, 2016

Thunderstorms brought heavy rainfall, winds of up to 86 mph, flash flooding and a collapsed road to eastern San Bernardino County on Friday evening and early Saturday, a National Weather Service spokesman said.

The stormy activity, created by a low pressure system combined with monsoonal moisture, began about mid-evening Friday, said National Weather Service meteorologist James Brotherton.

Around 9:44 p.m., severe wind gusts were reported at Needles Airport. At some point the gusts had gotten up to 86 miles per hour, according to Brotherton.

Shortly after 10 p.m., there was a report of a flash flood on Highway 95, about 6 miles south of the town of Needles. Part of the road there collapsed, Brotherton said.

Shortly after 3:30 a.m., a semi-truck was stuck in floodwater on a portion of Highway 95 that was about 17 miles northwest of Needles.

Brotherton said it's hard to say how much rain fell on the High Desert because the storms were isolated.

"With scattered thunderstorms, some areas might have had four or five inches of rain and some areas might have had no rain at all," he said.

Brotherton said rain was expected to continue over the desert Saturday evening, but he said it wouldn't be as severe. It doesn't look like flooding is a concern at this point, he said.

As for areas west of the desert? Brotherton said expect it to stay dry and clear, with temperatures in the low 90s. He said the temperatures will increase slightly going into the workweek.

Contact the writer: 951-368-9693, agroves@scng.com or [@AlexDGroves](https://twitter.com/AlexDGroves) on Twitter.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160827/heavy-rains-from-thunderstorms-collapse-road-in-needles-bring-86-mph-winds>

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Youth Sought for New Council

Posted: Thursday, August 25, 2016 6:00 am

Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford is looking for a few good young men and women.

The 20 to 25 high school students will become part of the 2nd District Youth Council; they will serve as an advisory board to the supervisor.

The Youth Council, Rutherford said, will identify youth-related problems and participate in volunteer activities throughout the 2nd District. Council members will convey their concerns and provide recommendations to Supervisor Rutherford and her staff about the quality of life in San Bernardino County.

Council members will elect a board of directors: director, assistant director, treasurer, secretary, philanthropic chair/event coordinator. The council will meet at 5 p.m. on third Tuesdays in the Big Horn room at Central Park in Rancho Cucamonga. A Youth Council retreat will take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sept. 24 in the same location.

Rutherford foresees the council brainstorming solutions to issues the youth's communities are facing. They will also organize events such as food drives, service at animal shelters, helping the homeless events.

The Youth Council, Rutherford noted, is an opportunity for young people to get involved in their communities by working with the county supervisor to develop solutions to issues identified by them. They will also learn about the operation of the county.

Youth Council members must attend a high school in the 2nd District, maintain a 2.5 GPA, be in good standing with their school, have access to e-mail and provide their own transportation to meetings and events.

On the application—available at www.sbcounty.gov/Rutherford—applicants will be asked to express their reasons for wanting to serve, tell about experience they have that they think will contribute to the council, write about what they like best about living in San Bernardino County and what they would like to see changed, describe their work ethic and leadership style and discuss why it is important for high school students to be involved in their community. There is also an evaluation that must be filled out by a teacher or counselor.

Applications are due by Sept. 2. Students with questions may call Stephanie at (909) 387-4909 or e-mail her at Stephanie.Rose@bos.sbcounty.gov.

By [Shea Johnson](#)[Print Page](#)

August 28, 2016 4:33PM

During Bluecut Fire, a homeless man, his dwelling saved

HESPERIA — On the evening of Aug. 16, Lesley McConnell, a teacher in Barstow, was rushing home here from work, drawing closer to carnage with each mile logged on southbound Interstate 15.

Less than two hours later, shortly before 7:47 p.m., the ravaging Bluecut Fire, which began that morning in the Cajon Pass, would swallow the iconic Summit Inn restaurant. In a desert shack east of Oak Hill Road, not far from the diner, lived McConnell's mentally ill father-in-law.

As the flames encroached upon his makeshift abode, fueled by dry brush and winds, he remained unaccounted for while dusk crept into night.

In an interview with the Daily Press and through a letter sent to this newspaper, the story of how McConnell's homeless father-in-law survived the 36,000-plus-acre blaze — his dwelling also saved from destruction by a man he hardly remembers — helps to illustrate the humanity of strangers in the face of chaos and uncertainty.

Sometime after 6 p.m., McConnell exited southbound I-15 at Main Street — realizing that the freeway was blocked off just 3.5 miles further south — where she traveled a back way to Ranchero Road.

"There were cars and semis parked on both sides of Ranchero, black smoke plummeting in the air. It looked quite apocalyptic," she wrote.

She attempted to turn south onto Mariposa Road toward Oak Hill Road, but was met by traffic cones cordoning off the path. Consumed by concern for the well-being of her father-in-law, a man in his mid- to late-sixties who suffers from schizophrenia, she said she didn't know whether he could cognitively digest what was occurring around him.

"My heart was racing," she wrote. "The devastation made it so real."

She pulled over her vehicle and walked to a man blocking the roadway, telling him her story and now almost in tears. He warned that it was impossible to get all the way to Oak Hill Road, but he allowed her through in her vehicle up to a roadblock a bit more south.

"As I drove out there, I could see flames and black smoke behind the lights of the road block," she wrote. "There were a lot of vehicles pulled to the side of Mariposa Road, watching and frightened of their own homes burning to the ground."

In a daze, she found a San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputy and repeated her story: She needed to make sure her father-in-law was all right. The deputy couldn't allow her to pass any further, however, because as McConnell put it: "(T)hat part of the desert was currently on fire."

The deputy took her father-in-law's name and the whereabouts of his camp site, vowing to pass along the message to other law enforcement and emergency personnel and assuring her that authorities were assessing the area.

"I felt helpless and prayed that he would get out of there," she wrote. "I did as much as I was allowed to do."

Later that night, a knock on the McConnell family door: Her father-in-law, "rough looking," but safe and seeking sleep. The next morning, he would tell McConnell and his son that he had been awakened by the sound of a tractor and much smoke. The man operating the tractor told him the desert was on fire and he must leave, driving him on the tractor to a main road, pledging he'd try his best to save where he lived.

His home is a blanket-draped tent with a mattress and small couch inside. Nearby, a fire pit had been constructed using bottles. He had only lived there specifically for six months or so, McConnell said, but he has found residence in that area for about a decade.

On Aug. 20, three days later, McConnell and her husband drove out to the area to see if the homestead still stood or, more likely, had fallen prey to the flames that destroyed in this region an estimated 110 homes, 216 outbuildings and over 200 vehicles.

"What we saw as we drove out there was pure devastation. The desert was blackened and desolate. We continued to look for his home, but thought the worst, after all everything was burnt," she wrote. "Then we saw it. The man on the tractor kept his promise. Everything around (my father-in-law's) makeshift home was burnt, but his home and his belongings were saved."

Judging by remnants of flames that left scars on the ground leading up to the dwelling, McConnell believes that the man must have used the tractor to dig a fire line around it.

She said her father-in-law has since returned to his little oasis in the desert. Yet because the Chevron gas station is now closed near the Summit Inn where he would often frequent for food and water, and had been "friendly with the people there," she supposed he may have to move.

"The compassion of the men who saved a homeless man's home and belongings brought a smile to (my husband and I)," she wrote. "This wasn't a home that contained expensive cars, furniture, electronics, and photos of children. This was a home that sheltered a homeless man."



The shack in the desert east of the Summit Inn where Lesley McConnell's father-in-law lives. Photograph captured roughly 10 days after the Bluecut Fire started. Courtesy: Lesley McConnell

"Humanity at its finest."

McConnell said she reached out to this newspaper to express her and her husband's gratitude to those that not only kept an eye on her father-in-law and saved his home, but to all who risked their lives fighting the BlueCut Fire.

Shea Johnson may be reached at 760-955-5368 or SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter at @DP_Shea.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160828/NEWS/160829692>

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By [Charity Lindsey](#)[Print Page](#)

August 28, 2016 12:01AM

Expert says during fires, it's best to 'let nature take its course' with animals

With back-to-back wildfires devouring more than 44,000 acres of land in and around the Victor Valley this month, human inhabitants haven't been the only ones forced to evacuate.

Along with the pets and livestock of more than 82,000 residents evacuated by the recently contained Bluecut Fire, wild animals of all kinds fled from their natural habitats in the wake of the fast-moving blaze.

The impact a fire has on wildlife probably isn't as serious as many might expect, however, according to officials with the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (DFW).

"First of all, during a fire, animals will get out of the way as fast as they can," DFW spokesman Andrew Hughan said. "They know their instincts."

Hughan said that DFW doesn't ever facilitate animal evacuations or replant or repopulate after a fire.

"We really just have to let nature take its course," Hughan said.

The greater damage to wildlife is not in actual deaths resulting from the fire directly, but from what it slowly does to the animal populations over time, as they have to resort to other food sources and habitats.

"They'll go to an existing habitat," Hughan said. "If a male runs out into another male's habitat, they'll fight it out and one of them ends up dead."

Hughan said there's no way to accurately gauge the total effect a wildfire has on animal and plant life.

No matter how cruel it may seem, however, the DFW urges people not to try to rescue a wild animal.

"We can't put human lives at risk," Hughan said. "Don't try to help it. Don't pick it up. As soon as you touch it, you've likely committed that animal to death because it will be rejected by the other animals. You have to leave it, even if it's suffering, and let animal control professionals make a decision."

The department advises that people keep their distance and call local animal control if they come across an injured animal.

Hughan said that the fire is more likely to hurt smaller animals like squirrels, raccoons and hedgehogs.

"The bigger the animal, the easier it is to escape," Hughan said. "Even so, it's not like officials find dead animals all over the place. Most of them sense it coming, and they run or they get underground. They can hold it out."

Overall, protecting wildlife isn't "a priority for any agency," Hughan said — the priority is containing the fire and keeping people safe.

Charity Lindsey may be contacted at 760-951-6245 or clindsey@vvdailypress.com. Follow her on twitter @DP_Charity.



A rabbit looks for safe cover as flames from the Bluecut Fire surround it. James Quigg, Daily Press

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160828/NEWS/160829739>

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Front row: David North (third from left), FVP-Regional Manager at Desert Community Bank; Robin McCarthy (fourth from left), President of Fire Family Foundation; Mike McClintock (third from right), President of San Bernardino County Firefighters Association; Tina Hwang (second from right), SVP-Consumer Bank Regional Director at East West Bank. Second row: Jim Johnstone (far left), Deputy Chief of San Bernardino County Fire Department; Robert Lovingood (second from left), 1st District Supervisor of San Bernardino County.

EAST WEST BANK DONATES \$50,000 TO SUPPORT BLUE CUT FIRE RECOVERY

Victor Valley News August 25, 2016 News

Pasadena, California – August 25, 2016 – East West Bank announced that it has donated \$50,000 to San Bernardino County Firefighters Association to support relief efforts for the Blue Cut fire in the county.

A check presenting ceremony took place on Wednesday, August 24, 2016, at the Phelan branch of Desert Community Bank, a division of East West Bank. Tina Hwang, SVP, Consumer Bank Regional Director at East West Bank, and David North, FVP, Regional Manager at Desert Community Bank, handed the check to Mike McClintock, President, San Bernardino County Firefighters Association.

“The five-year drought has made every brush fire in California potentially destructive to our communities,” said Emily Wang, SVP, Director of Marketing and Community Development at East West Bank. “As members of San Bernardino County, we are here with our community during difficult times. Therefore, upon learning the wide-spreading fire, we immediately contributed to the relief effort to help minimize the damage. We are grateful to the firefighters who have been on the frontline risking their lives to protect the community.”

“I cannot thank Desert Community Bank, and its parent company East West Bank enough for its generous donation to San Bernardino County Firefighters Association. San Bernardino County firefighters serve the Tri-

Communities and many other communities with pride, and are committed to providing premiere fire services,” said McClintock.

Jim Johnstone, Deputy Chief, San Bernardino County Fire Department; Robert Lovingood, First District Supervisor of San Bernardino County; Robin Mc Carthy, President of Fire Family Foundation, organization representatives and local officials also attended the ceremony.

A portion of the donation will also be allocated to Fire Family Foundation to support families of firefighters, fire victims, fire departments and charities.

For impacted customers, East West Bank will be waiving certain service fees and late fees on payments for mortgage, home equity lines of credit, or other loan products through September, 2016.

Desert Community Bank operates a total of eight branches in the High Desert area.

About San Bernardino County Firefighters Association

SBCoFFA was born in the 1930s as the Fontana Firefighters Association, which transitioned over the years into the Fontana Fire Protection District, was merged into the Central Valley Fire District and then finally became the San Bernardino County Fire Department. The primary mission of SBCoFFA has always been to provide support to its members in times of need, illness and injury. SBCoFFA is also a proud supporter of many local charities, Fire Explorer programs, and betterment of the fire service as a whole.

About East West Bank

East West Bancorp, Inc. is a publicly owned company with total assets of \$33.0 billion and is traded on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbol “EWBC.” The Company’s wholly owned subsidiary, East West Bank, is one of the largest independent banks headquartered in California. East West is a premier bank focused exclusively on the United States and Greater China markets and operates over 130 locations worldwide, including in the United States markets of California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Texas and Washington. In Greater China, East West’s presence includes full service branches in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Shantou and Shenzhen, and representative offices in Beijing, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Taipei and Xiamen. For more information on East West, visit the Company’s website at www.eastwestbank.com.

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY'S FIRST CHILDREN'S WAITING ROOMS

Posted: Saturday, August 27, 2016 8:27 am

The San Bernardino Superior Court is pleased to announce the much anticipated opening of the first Children's Waiting Rooms in San Bernardino County on Tuesday, September 6, 2016.

This free service will be available Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to noon, and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., (except court holidays) for children 2 1/2 years old (toilet-trained) and up to 14 years of age whose parents or guardians are conducting court business at the San Bernardino Justice Center and Historic Courthouse locations.

Modeled after successful waiting rooms in courthouses of other counties, this program will provide a place for creativity and imagination away from the courtroom, which can be an upsetting and sometimes frightening experience for young children. The waiting rooms will be operated and staffed by a private vendor, Choices for Children, with credentialed and experienced childcare providers trained to interact positively with children, making children feel welcomed and safe. Accommodation is limited and provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

In early fall 2016, the Superior Court of San Bernardino County plans to hold a grand opening ceremony that will serve to feature the Children's Waiting Rooms' contribution to the community.

For more information please contact the Court Executive Office at 909- 708-8746.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Here's the next open space Redlands hopes to protect

By Sandra Emerson, Redlands Daily Facts

Sunday, August 28, 2016



REDLANDS >> Plans to purchase a 12.32-acre property off Live Oak Canyon Road will expand the city's open-space initiative, known as the Emerald Necklace, into Riverside County and provide more recreation space, officials say.

"I think it's fantastic that we have achieved that objective that the city set for itself over 20 years ago," Mayor Pro Tem Jon Harrison said. "I think we are creating a significant portion for the Emerald Necklace, which is an essential resource where people can drive in Redlands and enjoy a natural setting."

The property will allow for passive and active open space uses, including resource preservation and habitat restoration. It abuts Riverside County's 10,000-acre natural preserve in San Timoteo Canyon.

The majority of the property is natural and open, with exception of one single-family home, buildings and a water well.

The city is buying the property with the help of the [Redlands Conservancy](#), which initially reached out to the property owner a couple of years ago.

"The property owner was not willing to sell at the time and then about a year ago he contacted us and said 'OK, let's talk,' " said Sherli Leonard, executive director of the conservancy. "Then it took us maybe more than a year to settle on a deal."

The city is buying the land for \$433,000, including an \$82,000 grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board, \$351,000 from the city's open space and park and open space development funds.

The city's desire to preserve open space dates back to the Park and Open Space plan drafted in 1987, which included voter-approved bond funding to be used for the preservation and procurement of open space, citrus and park opportunities.

The plan was incorporated into the city's 1995 General Plan, a document that provides guidelines for growth and development in Redlands.

Mayor Paul Foster and Councilman John James will work with the conservancy on plans to maintain and care for the property, including the house and other buildings.

Harrison requested the City Council form the subcommittee during a special meeting on Aug. 16 in order to have a plan in place when escrow closes.

"Once escrow closes on the property and the city becomes the owner, the current owner will no longer have responsibility to keep an eye on those buildings and keep them safe," Harrison explained.

Leonard said the subcommittee will begin meeting next week to discuss uses for the house and a lease agreement between the city and conservancy.

“We’re looking at the possibility for it being a staging area for hikers, bicyclists and equestrians,” Leonard said.

The new property, she said, will allow people to connect to the San Timoteo Canyon State Park and city-owned open space.

“It will just be an ideal centerpiece and a gateway to all of these trails for all users,” Leonard said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/environment-and-nature/20160828/heres-the-next-open-space-redlands-hopes-to-protect>

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

4 Highland districts to be on November election ballot

By Sandra Emerson, Redlands Daily Facts

Saturday, August 27, 2016

HIGHLAND >> The candidate to represent District 3 on the [Highland City Council](#) has been decided.

Councilwoman Penny Lilburn, who is running unopposed in November, was appointed to the seat.

The City Council made the move at a special meeting Thursday.

Highland will spend \$35,000 to put on the election in November, the first to feature district-based elections. Previously, Highland voters elected their representatives citywide.

According to a city staff report, removing this district from the ballot will result in some savings, according to a city staff report.

The city was ordered by a judge to change from an at-large election system to a district-based system after they were sued for violating the California Voting Rights Act.

All five council seats are up for election.

Lilburn will serve a four-year term.

Council members elected in Districts 1 and 5 will be elected to four-year terms, while council members elected in Districts 2 and 4 will be elected to two-year terms

Here are the candidates running in November:

- District 1: Jesus Chavez, Jorge Heredia and Ray Hilfer
- District 2: Tony Cifuentes and Anaeli Solano
- District 4: Frank Adomitis, Christy Marin, Rusty Rutland and incumbent John Timmer
- District 5: Jerry Martin and incumbent Larry McCallon

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160827/4-highland-districts-to-be-on-november-election-ballot>

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Pazzo's demolition underway



Bonafide Demolition Services of Cresline was seen August 17th demolishing the remains of the fire-gutted Pazzo's Pizza and Italian restaurant and adjoining Rim of the World Sports Bar. (Photo by Douglas W. Motley)

Friday, Aug 26, 2016

By Douglas W. Motley At long last, the demolition of the burned-out Pazzo's Pizza and Italian Restaurant and Rim of the World Sports Bar in Top Town Crestline is underway following a lengthy process of acquiring authorization from county officials. The historic building, dating back to 1929, succumbed to the ravages of a November 17, 2015, blaze that fire officials said may have been ignited by an electrical issue in a common attic space the pizza restaurant shared with the bar next door. In an August 17 interview with the building's current owner, Anthony Vitale, *The Alpenhorn News* learned that he would like to rebuild on the same location. "It depends on what the county allows. If I could do the same exact footprint, then I would talk to my contractor and rebuild an exact replacement." Vitale said he fell in love with the corner the building was on during a visit to Crestline many years ago. "It reminds me of a European resort town." Asked whether limited parking availability might be a problem in getting permission to rebuild, he pointed out that most of the parking spaces in the Top Town business district are designated for public parking. "Nearby parking is public and is not used at night," he said. Regarding the adjoining Rim of the World Sports Bar, Vitale said, "I would give Cliff (Herington) the first opportunity to reopen." If he's not able to rebuild on the original footprint, he said he would either put in a residential structure or sell the property to another investor. Asked why there was such a long delay (approximately 9 months) in getting the gutted building torn down, Vitale said it had a lot to do with lengthy investigations by fire and sheriff's officials, as well as, his insurance company. "The insurance company investigation didn't conclude until May." Then, he said, there were more delays caused by Code Enforcement and the County Building Department. "I actually enjoyed working with Code Enforcement, they are only interested in protecting public safety," Vitale said, noting that he complied early on, at his own expense, with

their order to have the property fenced-off. Though Vitale didn't want to discuss the financial details of his recent insurance settlement, he said he had actually been underinsured and that after paying-off the bank loan on the property he was not left with a huge sum. He did say, however, that he has access to funds to rebuild, if the county authorizes him to do so. He said the demolition should be completed in a few days.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

How Upland shut down 24 medical marijuana dispensaries since 2014

By Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Saturday, August 27, 2016



UPLAND >> At least once a week, commercial real estate agent Tom Mitchell said he is approached by operators of [medical marijuana dispensaries](#) looking to open up shop in town.

The problem is, such enterprises are [illegal in Upland](#) and have been for several years.

To skirt around the problem, the operators often offer to pay three times the asking rent and six months' security deposit. Some are willing to pay any legal fees they may incur, said Mitchell, who manages three commercial properties in Upland with about 100

tenants.

"They will say and do anything to get in here," he said. "We're any easy mark."

Police Chief Brian Johnson is well aware of the situation. When he became the city's top cop in April 2014, there were about six operating illegally. Today, that number fluctuates anywhere [from eight to 12](#).

"We will close one or two down and one will pop up," he said.

Since 2014, Upland has closed 24 illegal dispensaries.

A never-ending battle

In a recent sit-down at City Hall, Johnson and interim City Manager Martin Thouvenell outlined [current and pending practices](#) aimed at eliminating the public nuisance.

"Police and everybody else in the city is diligently pursuing these business and trying to eliminate them as fast as we can. It's very difficult, and I think what we're doing is kind of setting the standards for other cities," Thouvenell said.

Under the city's current business permitting process, the maximum fine Upland can impose is about \$25,000.

Thouvenell said he's working with staff and the police department to change that, with the possibility of instituting daily fines that can compound each day the illegal business is in operation.

Upland, Johnson said, he started to take a proactive approach in shuttering these illegal operation — although that might not always seem like the case.

It's a cumbersome process, Johnson said.

“The city has to follow the rules of the law and get a court order,” he said. “For criminal cases, there are certain protocols that we set up and agreed to with the county District Attorney’s Office. We have to meet those thresholds of what they want done in terms of presenting a criminal case for filing.”

Johnson devised an aggressive approach by talking to his undercover narcotics task force, code enforcement officers, the city attorney as well as having meetings with the San Bernardino County District Attorney and chief deputy district attorney out of the Rancho Cucamonga office to really come up with a strategy.

3-pronged approach

Now getting a dispensary to cease operations involves a cooperative effort from several city departments. The city is dealing with the dispensary in three different ways: first administratively with citations, which oftentimes are turned over to the county District Attorney for criminal prosecution. Finally, the city attorney files for a civil injunction.

“The will of the people is that we have a total ban on medical marijuana dispensaries and so we are going to continue on that approach: administrative, civil and criminal fines,” Johnson said.

Upland will use those three approaches concurrently.

Since Johnson became police chief, Upland has collected \$250,000 from illegal medical marijuana dispensaries through judgments, settlements or court orders.

“I’m very serious about recouping the cost to the taxpayers. More importantly, this city has demonstrated they do not want medical marijuana dispensaries, at least to date,” he said.

Johnson declined to say how many in the police force or staff are working on building these cases against dispensaries.

The time that passes from the city is notified about an illegal operation to when the doors are shut at a dispensary is unclear. No one in the city wants to get into the exact details. Both Thouvenell and Johnson declined to state because of pending litigation.

How the process works in general

When a case gets turned over to the city attorney’s office, it takes about a week for the city to get a temporary restraining order, the city attorney’s office said.

If the business does not shut down, then Upland will seek a warrant. To this date, every case Upland has taken up for a civil injunction matter, the court has issued permanent injunctions, as well ordering the defendant to pay the city its legal fees.

As for the items found at the dispensaries, the city can seize the property, the city attorney’s office said.

Litigation doesn’t seem to deter operators or repeat offenders from returning to Upland.

In late December, the undercover narcotics team served a search warrant in a medical office near San Antonio Regional Hospital and the very next day the business was back open. The day it reopened, the undercover narcotics team had to secure another search warrant and another court order to shut it down again.

Whack-a-mole, dispensary-style

Johnson said he just learned a medical marijuana dispensary has reopened less than a year after a court order banished it from Upland.

“It goes to demonstrate how lucrative this business or enterprise is, in terms of the money that they’re making, and so they are going to take a chance and continue to operate,” he said.

What kind of money? At one operation police seized more than \$20,000 in cash, he said.

As part of his tough stance on dispensaries, Johnson sent out a letter to property owners, every business and to major real estate brokerage firms, informing them it is illegal to rent to medical marijuana dispensaries.

Some of the offenders have been what Johnson described as “mom and pop” property owners duped by the pot shop operators. It appears a collective is operating on the property of the now iconic defunct Buffalo Inn on Foothill Boulevard. A makeshift sign helps patients find “Dank City,” a medical marijuana dispensary located behind the former restaurant and tavern.

Although he didn’t directly respond to the status of that business, Johnson did say “every medical marijuana dispensary that the Upland Police Department is aware of is under official investigation.”

Commercial real estate agent Mitchell said the city is facing a long battle.

“I’ve been in Los Angeles, in San Diego and when they hear I’m from the Upland area, they know us. We have a reputation of being easy,” Mitchell told the Planning Commission on Wednesday night.

Mitchell said there needs to be a point when it becomes too costly to operate in the city.

“Right now, it’s totally worth it to them,” he said.

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URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20160827/how-upland-shut-down-24-medical-marijuana-dispensaries-since-2014>

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Legalizing weed could create \$6.5B market by 2020, report says

By [ALICIA WALLACE](#)

2016-08-25 17:58:43



California legalizing recreational marijuana could grow the industry there to \$6.5 billion in 2020 – and also serve as a “watershed moment” for the industry in and outside the United States, according to a report released Tuesday.

Market research firms ArcView and New Frontier delved into California’s massive and uniquely complicated cannabis industry to project its direction and what may be in store if voters pass Proposition 64 in November.

If the Adult Use of Marijuana Act succeeds and is implemented by 2018, California’s legal marijuana sales likely will climb by \$1.6 billion within the first year, according to the ArcView and New Frontier market report.

That would put the state’s medical and recreational industry on track to hit \$6.5 billion in revenue by 2020, up from \$2.8 billion in 2015, according to the report.

To give a little perspective: The nation’s legal cannabis industry is expected to climb to \$23 billion in 2020, up from \$5.7 billion in 2015.

“We think the activation of the adult-use market in California will undoubtedly make California the new epicenter in cannabis,” said John Kagia, executive vice president of industry analytics for New Frontier.

The sheer size of the state and its economy will help it maintain that status, Kagia said.

Even with a fractured, unregulated medical industry, California already accounts for nearly half of all the nation’s legal cannabis sales, ArcView and New Frontier reported. But California’s influence as a market mover goes far beyond its size, Kagia said.

“There’s going to be a professionalism of the industry, an emphasis on innovation once the market is legal in California that will dramatically accelerate the industry in a way that legalization (efforts) in Colorado and Washington haven’t been able to do.”

Silicon Valley should play a leading role, both via capital as well as technical and intellectual expertise, Kagia and co-authors wrote in the report.

California also is poised to be a leader in creating rules for social pot use; should become a frontrunner in developing organic standards; and likely will become a hub for cannabis research, as the Adult Use of Marijuana Act calls for 10 percent of sales tax collected to be spent on drug abuse research and another 10 percent on cannabis research, according to the market study. The ripple effects could be vast and affect industries such as biomedical research, applied materials and nutraceuticals, among many others, he said.

Additionally, if California goes recreational then it will apply greater pressure on Mexico to legalize, the authors wrote.

The legalization debate south of the U.S. border has evolved quickly as illustrated by the evolution of Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto, who in just six years has transformed from one of Latin America's most vocal drug warriors to a proponent of medical cannabis use and advocate for decriminalizing possession of up to an ounce for all adults. Legalization in California will only add fuel to the debate on cannabis law reform in Mexico and in other Latin American countries.

California's medical sales should stay relatively flat, according to the report. ArcView and New Frontier project the medical market should decline from \$2.76 billion in 2015 to \$2.53 billion in 2020.

California also will face plenty of unique challenges if it were to legalize, Kagia said. The state already has an "outsized scale" of cannabis production and is starting to see some land grabs by pot prospectors. A greater supply should mean cheaper costs for consumers, but also could very well pinch the producers, according to the report.

Legalization also would raise questions about the viability of indoor growhouses and whether the energy costs could be prohibitive as more greenhouses open, Kagia said.

But perhaps one of the greatest challenges for California is whether it can overcome itself.

California's medical market operated for nearly 20 years with limited government regulation. There was no agency tasked with regulatory oversight or business licensing, no requirement for patients to register with the state, and essentially no market standards for product safety and quality.

This led to significant problems with diversion of product from the legal to the illicit market, exposed early business operators to enforcement crackdowns, and made it difficult for the state to closely monitor the program due to the lack of centralized data and reporting.

In the fall of 2015, the state took steps to establish more stringent regulations for medical cannabis businesses, and individual jurisdictions will likely see even further policy adjustments in the coming years.

The stringent regulations came in the form of the Medical Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act, a two-year program intended to provide oversight for the medical industry, create a commercial license program and set consumer and environmental standards, according to the report.

Industry members told ArcView and New Frontier they're concerned about how distribution policies outlined in the medical cannabis act could result in higher prices for consumers, whether the costs would be too high for the majority of existing dispensaries to continue operating, and how local jurisdiction approvals would stymie the industry's potential.

The Adult Use of Marijuana Act does have some solutions for those concerns; however, if the contested legalization ballot issue does not pass, it's not necessarily a death knell for California or the nation's industry as a whole, Kagia said, noting that other states have legalization measures up for vote. To some in the industry, Prop. 64's failure would give the state the chance to implement the medical cannabis act first and set up an established foundation, he said.

"While the failure of the measure in California would be a setback, broadly speaking, we do not think it is going to significantly impede continued forward progress that we have been seeing in the shifting public attitudes (toward legalization)," he said.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Why some environmental activists say the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument plan is toothless

Five hearings set for draft proposal, environmental assessment

By Steve Scauzillo, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Sunday, August 28, 2016



The U.S. Forest Service's management plan for the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument was described as vague and toothless by numerous stakeholder groups who have reviewed the plan since its release earlier this week.

A [195-page document](#), which contains two parts called the monument plan and an environmental review of any changes, was intended to outline changes in four areas: transportation/access, wilderness zones/protected species, mining and recreation.

The 346,177-acre monument in the northern and eastern portions of the Angeles National Forest [as designated by President Barack Obama during his visit in October 2014](#) requires a new approach to managing the monument and the forest, which attracts 4 million visitors a year.

While the plan mentions issues raised during public hearings and in the 1,545 comments received, it labels them as “desired conditions” or things the Forest Service would like to see happen, not what will happen. Much of the plan states the conditions, such as overcrowding in the East Fork of the San Gabriel River — where families crowd into picnic areas and build rock dams in the river that can kill the endangered Santa Ana sucker fish — but doesn't prescribe solutions.

“Nowhere in the plan does the Forest Service actually commit to doing anything,” summed up John Monsen, a Sierra Club consultant and Pasadena resident who closely follows issues of open space, the Angeles and the national monument. “Nowhere (in the plan) do they say we are going to do something about it,” he added.

The Forest Service anticipated that criticism, said Justin Seastrand, environmental coordinator. The plan does not include “objectives” with specific end results and completion dates, he said. “We didn't think they were necessary to meet the monument proclamation and the planning rules,” he said. “But remember, this is a draft. We are very open to reconsidering that.”

The lack of benchmarks is making some leaders nervous.

Glendora City Councilwoman Judy Nelson, a member of the [San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative](#), said the group had a lot of questions about the plan, which she said was described to her by City Manager Chris Jeffers as a “high level review without many specifics.”

In 2014, Nelson opposed the creation of the monument by Obama and protested the president's visit. She has expressed deep concerns about the monument status as an extra layer of federal bureaucracy, blocking access to the San Gabriel River and the three county dams that provide drinking water to San Gabriel Valley residents.

On issues of water supply, she said: “I am worried about it.” But she said she hoped to get those issues clarified. The Collaborative met Thursday with Jeffrey Vail, supervisor of the Angeles National Forest, and others in an

effort to explain what the plan will accomplish. The Forest Service will hold [five public hearings](#) from Sept. 10 through Oct. 4 to collect comments.

“We are asking for more details. Everyone hopes to see specifics,” Nelson said.

[The monument](#) stretches from near Santa Clarita to Mount San Antonio, nicknamed Mount Baldy, the highest point in the Angeles and the monument at 10,040 feet. The monument does not include Chantry Flat or most front range hiking areas such as Eaton Canyon in Pasadena or Cucamonga Canyon in Rancho Cucamonga.

The plan addresses Obama’s request for greater access for low-income communities. The USFS would coordinate with Caltrans and “the Gold Line” as ways to bring people to nature who don’t have access to cars, according to the plan.

“Nothing in previous planning documents really spoke to that broader concept of how do people get to the national forest,” Seastrand said.

Many in the environmental community praised this effort but said it didn’t go far enough. “The strongest part of the plan is the transportation and access section,” Monsen said. “Again, they need to say exactly what they are going to do.”

Belinda Faustinos, who represents the group EnviroMetro, said she is working with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) to come up with train, bus and city shuttle routes from all parts of Los Angeles into the monument.

She said the Forest Service made great strides mentioning the need for providing car-less access. While it mentioned the Southern California Association of Governments, it left out the biggest transportation agency in the county, LA Metro.

“There are no specific objectives in the plan. That is a little problematic,” she said. “We can all have lofty goals but it is the milestones that we need to benchmark.”

As far as improving the trash-strewn picnic grounds along the East Fork of the San Gabriel River, the plan talks of goals for better trails, more parking and even a bus turn-around area. “Some of that is dependent on financing and I’m sure that is part of their hesitation,” she said.

First-time monument visitors Daniel Lopez, 18; Benjie Armendarez, 18; and Marcus Landmesser, 18, drove Thursday from Fontana to Cattle Canyon/East Fork Trail to hike to the Bridge to Nowhere, an arch bridge overlooking the river that never was connected to a roadway. Today, it’s where a private company offers bungee jumping experiences.

The friends said there were no markers indicating the location of the Bridge To Nowhere nor the old mines they wanted to explore. “Why not point stuff out so we know exactly where the tourist attractions are, so we can enjoy them and not spend hours finding them,” Landmesser said.

Rep. Judy Chu, D-Pasadena, [whose bill to turn a large portion of the Angeles and Puente Hills into a national recreation area morphed into the president’s smaller but significant designation](#), said so far the monument label has added \$6.5 million in federal funding, including two visitor information specialists, a trash truck driver and three new field rangers.

“This draft is a good starting point that reflects the efforts and ambitions of the community at large. However, it is clear that much work remains to be done to achieve our goals,” Chu said in an emailed response.

Daniel Rossman, senior regional representative with The Wilderness Society, saying the plan expresses a vision of a forest offering a better visitor experience, with protected wilderness, interpretive signs and better access, but nothing concrete.

“Where they are falling short is holding themselves accountable in achieving that vision,” Rossman said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/environment-and-nature/20160828/why-some-environmental-activists-say-the-san-gabriel-mountains-national-monument-plan-is-toothless>

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By JON COUPAL

[Print Page](#)

August 29, 2016 8:33AM

Commentary: California Special Districts: Hiding in plain sight

Special districts in California are the unnoticed variant of local government entities. Although they spend over \$42 billion annually, most taxpayers don't give these ubiquitous agencies much thought. They vary from modest vector control districts to behemoths like the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit authority, an agency that has a billion-dollar budget and, despite declining ridership, continues efforts to suck ever more pennies from every dollar spent in Los Angeles County.

The problem with these semi-autonomous agencies is that it is extremely difficult to determine whether or not taxpayers are receiving good value for every one of the billions of dollars being spent by agencies that, in many cases, are governed by unelected political appointees. Even when these boards are directly elected, many special districts do not receive the same level of scrutiny as do city and county governments.

Most taxpayers support local control, but they also want to see local governments and special districts maintain maximum transparency, follow the Brown Act and post important fiscal information on their websites. This information is a valuable asset to those who want to look over the shoulders of elected officials and bureaucrats to make certain that funds are appropriately spent. Sadly, this information is not always readily available and accountability is lacking.

While some agencies may willfully violate the law, in many instances, illegal actions are simply oversights. But because these districts tend to operate "under the radar" improper procedures may be overlooked for years. For example, in 2014 it was discovered that a fire district was illegally collecting tax proceeds from property owners outside the district boundaries and that practice had been ongoing for several years. It took a special act of the Legislature to reimburse property owners for the illegal taxes they had paid. With greater transparency, this problem would likely have been avoided.

In addition to errors that go uncorrected due to secretive management practices, many of these agencies are hoarding vast quantities of cash. The large reserves are often in amounts that are in multiples of a district's annual budget and not justified by serious plans for major capital investment with a realistic timeline for construction.

Adding insult to injury, despite the fact that most are in a solid financial position, special districts have been uniting to lobby for higher taxes. The California Special Districts Association, as well as other local government associations, has ramped up efforts to eliminate Proposition 13's two-thirds vote requirement for approval of new taxes for infrastructure improvements.

Clearly, special districts deserve to be noticed both for the worthwhile services they provide as well as their potential for mischief at taxpayers' expense. No longer should these agencies be allowed to hide in plain site

In dealing with special districts, good, bad and indifferent, taxpayers' and service users' most powerful tool is awareness. These agencies control billions of dollars and taxpayers have the right to demand accountability. While local control should remain the objective, the Legislature can help by strengthening guidelines on the maintenance of reserve funds, which for many districts greatly exceed any potential need, as well as mandating periodic reporting and publication of financial reports on line.

Taxpayers should also take heart from knowing that special districts are getting renewed scrutiny from oversight agencies. Last week, the California Commission for State Government Organization and Economy, also known as the Little Hoover Commission, held hearings on some of the perceived abuses by California's myriad special districts. The Commission specifically requested testimony from the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association on several issues including the practice of many districts to hoard taxpayer dollars.

Enhanced oversight of special districts can deter some of the well documented instances of bad behavior reported by the Little Hoover Commission and other investigative interests. Whether that oversight comes from taxpayer groups, government oversight agencies, the media or individual taxpayers, it is especially important to drag these often unknown agencies into the sunlight so that citizens can more clearly see what they are doing and how they are spending our money.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association — California's largest grass-roots taxpayer organization dedicated to the protection of Proposition 13 and the advancement of taxpayers' rights.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160829/NEWS/160829685>[Print Page](#)

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Officials at odds over government providing storage lockers for homeless

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Sunday, August 28, 2016



The city of Pomona's agreement to provide nearly 400 [storage lockers](#) to the homeless to settle a federal lawsuit last week is the latest in an ongoing legal battle over the property rights of homeless citizens.

Pomona has agreed to pony up \$100,000 to provide 388 60-gallon storage lockers to homeless residents, free of charge, to be located somewhere near City Hall. The city will also, per the terms of the 18-page settlement agreement, pay an additional \$100,000 annually to staff the lockers.

The settlement ended a [federal lawsuit](#) filed in March on behalf of more than a dozen homeless residents and North Towne Christian Church, who alleged city officials — mainly police and code enforcement officers and sanitation workers — summarily confiscated and discarded their personal belongings, including the ashes of dead relatives.

According to Assistant City Attorney Andrew Jared, the lockers will be housed in a moveable shipping container.

Pomona's facility to be similar to San Diego's

Pomona's storage facility would be similar to San Diego's [transitional storage center](#), introduced in 2011 after the city [settled a class-action lawsuit](#) with the ACLU challenging the city's policy of seizing and summarily destroying the possessions of homeless men and women.

"The transitional storage center has been a huge success. Its primary benefit has been to those homeless individuals who, when freed of the constant of watching their property, can take the necessary steps to transition to jobs and housing," Gerry Braun, spokesman for the San Diego City Attorney's Office, said in an email.

Anne Rios, executive director at Think Dignity, a nonprofit that contracts with the city to oversee operation of the storage center, said all 304 lockers are now in use, and more than 150 homeless men and women are on a waiting list for lockers as they become available.

"Our wait list works by a check-in system. The more often someone checks in, the higher they rise on the check list," Rios said. "Right now, we are averaging close to 30 check-ins (daily)."

The average wait for someone who checks in daily is about a month, she said. If a homeless person checks in only once a week, the average wait time for a locker is about a year.

"It depends on the person's perseverance," Rios said.

On Los Angeles' Skid Row, more than 1,000 storage lockers are provided to the homeless, but, similar to San Diego's, they are all in use and the waiting list is long, said Carol Sobel, an attorney who has been litigating

cases on behalf of the homeless for 16 years.

“I think storage units are important if, like anything else, they are accessible,” Sobel said. “In Los Angeles, we have one storage facility in downtown Los Angeles, and it’s filled to capacity.”

Like in San Diego, homeless persons wanting a locker have the best chance of getting one if they check in daily and arrive first thing in the morning, Sobel said.

The problem with that, said Sobel, is the time conflicts with the serving of breakfast at local missions and soup kitchens, leaving the homeless with the choice of choosing to eat or stand in line in hopes of snatching a locker.

“If you live your life on the street, you have to be on someone else’s timetable,” Sobel said. “And in Los Angeles right now, the estimated time to get a (storage) unit is six months to two years.”

In March, Sobel filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the city of Los Angeles on behalf of four homeless people, accusing police of arresting them, summarily confiscating their property — mainly shopping carts, tents and blankets — then releasing them from custody without their belongings. Essentially, Sobel maintains the city has criminalized being homeless.

Sobel’s case is ongoing, and in April a federal judge granted a preliminary injunction prohibiting police from seizing homeless people’s property until the case is resolved, Sobel said.

Pomona’s lockers should be more effective than those in Los Angeles and San Diego, Jared said. The city will provide 388 lockers, and the latest homeless census tallied 366 unsheltered homeless individuals. The legal settlement requires the city to adjust the number of lockers based on the yearly count.

In San Bernardino County, the city of San Bernardino has the lion’s share of homeless people. Seccombe Lake Park in the city’s downtown area houses the city’s Homeless Access Center — but not for long. The city is shutting it down Sept. 30.

The park used to be dotted with homeless encampments, and homeless men and women could visit the center for a shower, a cup of coffee and to charge their cellphones. The center also provided 60-gallon storage bins for homeless persons so they wouldn’t have to tote their belongings with them to job interviews and other appointments, Judy Connor, program manager at the center, said.

But the storage bins are no longer provided, as the center prepares for closure, Connor said.

San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales said she has heard directly from homeless people about police raids at encampments, seizing property and discarding it. Some of those discarded items included dentures and medications, resulting in some getting ill and winding up in the emergency room at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, the county hospital.

“There is a high incurred cost to the homeless and to government services because they eventually suffer dietary problems when their false teeth, their medication are thrown away and their blankets and their jackets are thrown away,” Gonzales said. “It’s a proven fact that when the homeless have their possessions taken from them, they struggle more than anyone else to replace them.”

San Bernardino police Lt. Rich Lawhead, who oversees his department’s homeless and quality-of-life programs, said his teams never discard or destroy property seized from homeless people during sweeps. The property is bagged, tagged and stored at the department for 90 days until it is reclaimed by the rightful owner. It is eventually discarded, however, if it is not claimed after 90 days, Lawhead said.

During homeless sweeps, police work with the Salvation Army, Central City Lutheran Mission, and other local nonprofits to provide homeless citizens essential services and shelter, if available, Lawhead said.

“We have a whole resource network we take with us when we go out to these locations,” Lawhead said.

On Wednesday, Lawhead said his team, working with the partner agencies, were able to find housing in Beaumont for a woman and her child.

“If we find people who are willing to take advantage of our resources, the resources are there,” Lawhead said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/20160828/officials-at-odds-over-government-providing-storage-lockers-for-homeless>

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Inland DAs take sides in death penalty measures

By Michael J. Williams, The Press-Enterprise

Friday, August 26, 2016



Proponents of the Nov. 8 ballot propositions 62 and 66 agree on one thing: California's death penalty system is an unequivocal mess.

They completely disagree on what to do about it.

Prop. 62 would get rid of the death penalty altogether while making life in prison without parole the state's maximum penalty.

Prop. 66 would reform the criminal justice system's handling of death penalty cases with the goal of speeding them up.

"(Prop. 66) is going to create a better system, a system of due process that is going to fix the broken appellate system," said San Bernardino County District Attorney Mike Ramos, co-chairman of the Yes on 66 campaign, at a press conference Friday in Murrieta.

If passed, the measure would designate Superior Court for initial death penalty appeal petitions, limit successive petitions, establish a time frame for court reviews, require appointed attorneys who take noncapital punishment appeals to accept death penalty cases and authorize the transfers of death row inmates to other California prisons.

Spokesman Jacob Hay for the Yes on 62 campaign said passage of Prop. 66 is not the antidote.

"Both sides agree the death penalty is failing," Hay said. "The system has grounded to a halt and is not a deterrent to crime.

"(Prop. 66) takes all the problems with the death penalty and makes them worse. In an effort to fix the system, which hasn't been able to be fixed in 40 years, Prop. 66 tries to rush justice, moves death penalty cases to local courts and puts taxpayers on the hook for attorneys."

In replacing the death penalty with life without parole, Prop. 62 would apply retroactively to those now sentenced to death and require inmates sentenced to life without parole to work with the state correction system's program.

Clarence Ray Allen was the last California inmate to be executed on Jan. 17, 2006, after spending 23 years and one month on Death Row in San Quentin prison.

According to an Aug. 5 corrections department report, there are now 746 inmates who could be executed if their cases ever cleared the prerequisite appeals. Among counties, Riverside, with 89, is second to Los Angeles with the most inmates on Death Row. San Bernardino County has 40.

Both measures would increase maximum-sentenced inmates' pay to be applied to victim restitution. Proponents of both say their solution would save millions of dollars.

Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin, who is the campaign's regional chairman, said he has faith in voters.

"I believe the people of California are going to do the right thing and pass this initiative," he said.

Hestrin, Ramos and other Prop 66 supporters at the Murrieta function were accompanied by Mary Ann and Bill Hughes. Their 11-year-old son Christopher Hughes was murdered in 1983 at a neighbor's house along with the father, mother and 10-year-old daughter of the Chino Hills household.

The man convicted of the murders, Kevin Cooper, remains on Death Row.

"Since then, our family has been put through our own special hell," Mary Ann Hughes said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20160826/inland-das-take-sides-in-death-penalty-measures>

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EDITORIAL: Teeming with tax hikes

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Seven cities across the Inland Empire will ask their residents to approve tax increases of various sorts in November. This includes four sales taxes, two hotel taxes and two marijuana taxes. The cities will have to demonstrate to voters that not only are they using their current resources effectively, but that residents will be better off if only the cities collected extra tax revenues.

This will be a particular challenge for the four cities calling for sales tax increases. Hemet, Menifee, Riverside and Temecula will ask their constituents to accept a 1 percent sales tax hike.

As general taxes, these cities can use the funds for whatever they wish, and cannot promise to spend the money for specific projects and uses. Taxes with specified uses, known as special taxes, require a two-thirds vote, whereas general taxes only require a simple majority for approval. Hemet recently attempted a special tax, a 1 cent sales tax allocating all revenues to public safety, but was rejected by voters in June, hence, it too is trying again, this time as a general tax.

Menifee, citing its ongoing problems following the state takeaway of vehicle license fees after they incorporated, perhaps has the clearest case for a tax proposal. Whereas Menifee is asking voters to essentially fill the hole left by the loss of those revenues, cities like Riverside and Temecula seem to have bigger ideas in mind, though precisely what they intend to do with the money is unclear as they have opted to go for general, unspecified taxes.

Moreno Valley and San Jacinto are giving less politically challenging transient occupancy taxes, or hotel taxes, a try. San Jacinto has tried and failed twice in the last couple of years to pass utility tax hikes, while Moreno Valley voters actually rejected an increase in hotel taxes in 2010. Whether either city has gained enough support to get different outcomes remains to be seen.

Uncertain, though practical, are proposals from San Jacinto and San Bernardino to tax marijuana businesses. Precisely how much revenue could be generated from this is unknown. Still, they could be perceived as less intrusive and more palatable than other taxes.

As cities have shown a particular willingness to pursue taxes, we encourage the taxpaying public to think carefully about whether their local governments truly need more of your money.

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How Riverside County wants to lower electric bills

By [JEFF HORSEMAN](#)

2016-08-26 18:51:18



Hoping to save residents and businesses money on their utility bills, Riverside County may be getting into the electricity business – well, sort of.

The county Board of Supervisors this week moved forward with a plan that could have the county buying electricity for customers in unincorporated areas through a process known as community choice aggregation.

If it works, ratepayers living outside of formally organized cities could save an average of 9 percent – \$7.75 million altogether – on their power bills,

according to a study released earlier this year.

“Those estimated potential savings could provide an economic incentive for businesses to locate in Riverside County,” read a county staff report. “The economic analysis demonstrated cost savings for residential customers at all rate levels.”

“The bottom line is, can we save ratepayers money?” said Deputy County Executive Officer Brian Nestande.

The county could be able to buy electricity from providers as early as next year, Nestande added.

Besides helping residents save money, Supervisor John Benoit said aggregation might have a side benefit of helping in-county wind and solar energy providers. The county might end up buying electricity from those local sources, he said.

Southern California Edison, which provides power throughout the county, is neutral on community choice aggregation, according to a statement issued by the private utility.

Aggregation wouldn't involve the county building power plants or buying utility lines. Instead, the county would act as a middle man of sorts and purchase electricity from existing providers such as Southern California Edison. Utilities still would own transmission lines and other infrastructure.

The county would not be on the hook financially for any power purchased through aggregation, Nestande said. Ratepayers would still be billed for electricity usage by power providers.

State law sets up a process for local governments to pursue aggregation, which is currently used in at least seven states including California.

Cape Cod, Mass., was the first community to pursue aggregation in 1997. Marin and Sonoma counties in California followed in 2010 and 2014, respectively.

The concept would not apply to incorporated cities or areas served by a public utility. If enacted, ratepayers in unincorporated communities would be able to opt out, although they could be charged for leaving if they opt out past the early stage of aggregation.

If the county moves forward with aggregation, it will have to submit an application to the California Public Utilities Commission, which oversees aggregation agreements. Supervisors this week approved seeking bids from consultants who can navigate the county through the aggregation process.

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Why time is running out on plan to fix California's roads

Despite a \$137 billion backlog in repairs, a special legislative session has not produced a solution.

By Jeff Horseman, The Press-Enterprise

Sunday, August 28, 2016



As the current legislative session winds down, a long-term fix for California's inability to fully pay for road repairs and other transportation needs remains elusive despite an ongoing special session that first convened on the matter last summer.

State Sen. Jim Beall, D-San Jose, and Assemblyman Jim Frazier, D-Oakley, have offered joint legislation that would provide \$7.4 billion a year – more than twice the amount in the governor's plan – to fix crumbling roads and pay for other transportation projects.

"California is facing an impending transportation funding crisis that cannot be ignored," Frazier said in a news release. "It is time for the Legislature to have a real, adult conversation about finding a comprehensive solution before it is too late."

But the Beall-Frazier package includes tax increases that require a two-thirds majority to pass in the Assembly and Senate. That means Republican votes are needed, and GOP lawmakers thus far have opposed tax hikes.

With various issues dominating Sacramento's agenda, transportation funding "hasn't been a high enough priority for either party," said Matt Cate, executive director of the California State Association of Counties, which advocates for counties' interests in state government.

An earlier report from Frazier's office noted that "2015 was supposed to be the year to fix transportation funding in the Capitol."

"The governor declared a \$6-billion-a-year need for basic maintenance and repairs to state highways alone and challenged the Legislature to deliver a funding plan to meet that need," the report read.

"A special session was called, hearings were held, and proposals and counter-proposals were floated. Nonetheless, the call for more transportation funding went unanswered."

Driving on deteriorating and congested roads costs Los Angeles-area drivers almost \$3,000 a year, according to TRIP, a national transportation research group. And a study by the Auto Insurance Center found that gridlock-related delays amount to \$1,316 a year for drivers in Riverside and San Bernardino counties and \$1,711 a year for drivers in Los Angeles, Long Beach and Anaheim.

"We need to repair our crumbling transportation infrastructure," Beall said in a recent interview. "All we need is one disaster to cost us billions of dollars."

The current legislative session ends Wednesday, Aug. 31. While the special session on transportation technically runs until Nov. 30, it's not clear whether lawmakers will return to Sacramento after August, especially with many running for re-election in November.

Gov. Jerry Brown convened the special session in July 2015 to deal with a mounting backlog in local road and state highway repairs, currently estimated at \$137 billion. In January, the California Transportation Commission cut \$754 million in its funding expectations for state road and transit projects to reflect shrinking revenue estimates.

GAS TAX WOES

California's gas tax often is blamed for the state's road repairs backlog. Over time, inflation, the rising popularity of electric vehicles and improvements in vehicle fuel efficiency have eroded the gas tax's ability to raise money for transportation needs.

And the California State Board of Equalization this summer cut the tax rate 2.2 cents to comply with a complicated "gas tax swap" formula put in place by the Legislature to solve an earlier budget crisis, a move that cuts money for roadwork.

The state's gas tax hasn't been raised since the mid-1990s, Beall and Frazier said. "Twenty-three years ago, (people) were actually paying more money than they're paying now," Beall said.

The Beall-Frazier package calls for \$7.4 billion annually to repair and maintain state and local roads, improve trade corridors and fund public transportation. It also would eliminate the gas-tax swap that leads the Board of Equalization to cut the gas tax rate and index transportation taxes and fees to keep up with inflation.

Funding would come from a 17 cent per-gallon gas tax increase; a 30 cent per-gallon hike in the diesel excise tax and a 3.5 percent increase in the diesel sales tax; a \$38 annual increase in vehicle registration fees and a \$165 annual fee on zero-emission vehicles. The package also would use \$300 million in cap-and-trade money.

GOP CONCERNS

It's not clear whether the Republican votes are there for passage.

"My thoughts are that Sacramento has been very irresponsible with the funds the public has trusted them with," said Assemblyman Eric Linder, R-Corona, who is vice chairman of the assembly transportation committee. "We should prove to the citizens that we are responsible with their money."

Linder has previously sponsored legislation to use vehicle weight fees for road maintenance. The Frazier-Beall package calls for returning \$1 billion in truck weight fees to transportation projects over five years.

Last summer, Assembly Republicans offered a nine-point plan that would pay for transportation needs through regulatory changes, existing revenue and money saved through eliminating vacant state government positions, including 3,500 Caltrans jobs deemed redundant.

By doing so, GOP lawmakers said \$6.6 billion a year could be devoted to transportation.

"While Assembly Republicans have introduced a comprehensive infrastructure spending plan to #FixOurRoads that includes no new taxes, Capitol Democrats have refused to put forward any reasonable alternatives or vote on the Assembly Republican plan," the GOP caucus said in a news release.

"It's time to stop paying lip service and actually do something to get Californians out of congested freeways without asking families to fork over even more of their tax dollars," Assemblywoman Ling Ling Chang, R-Diamond Bar, said in an email.

Republicans have called for regulatory reform to speed up transportation projects. The Frazier-Beall package proposes permanently extending a California Environmental Quality Act exemption for improvements to existing roadways and measures to boost oversight of transportation spending.

The package also would repay \$706 million in loans taken from transportation programs.

PILOT PROGRAM

While talk about a long-range transportation funding solution continues in Sacramento, Caltrans has launched a pilot program for a road-usage tax to replace the gas tax.

The nine-month program, which started this summer, involves 5,000 volunteers statewide to test out a tax based on miles driven. The idea is to come up with a fair way of charging drivers for how much they use roads that includes non-gas powered vehicles.

The program's results will be reported to a special advisory committee, the state transportation commission and the Legislature.

While a miles-driven tax is seen by supporters as fairer, more sustainable way to pay for transportation needs, there remain concerns about violating drivers' privacy by tracking how far and where they travel.

"It's certainly invasive. I have concerns about that," said Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, who sits on the transportation committee. "I have concerns about how much the public is willing to share about how much they travel."

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160828/why-time-is-running-out-on-plan-to-fix-californias-roads>

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NEWS > COLORADO NEWS

Fort Collins disability board walks out during dad's public comment about group home abuse

Foothills Gateway board criticized after walking out during remarks by parent Keith Liddle

By **JENNIFER BROWN** | jbrown@denverpost.com

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YouTube Screenshot

Keith Liddle addresses Foothills Gateway CCB. He spoke for 5 minutes & 16 seconds before he was interrupted and the subsequent walkout. They walked out on him before he was done speaking. The full version of this video is at the top of the playlist. Original recording date is 08/16/2016 in Fort Collins, CO

Parents whose children have developmental disabilities are outraged after a community board that manages their benefit money walked out of a meeting while a father was speaking about his son's treatment at a group home.

The walkout by the [Foothills Gateway](#) board in Fort Collins was recorded by an audience member and [posted on YouTube](#), then distributed by e-mail to hundreds of parents.

In the video, board president John Haley raises a hand and tells parent Keith Liddle that his “five minutes is up.” Liddle, a frequent speaker at board meetings, responds, “OK, let me go ahead and read this.” Haley repeats two more times that Liddle’s time is up and then abruptly calls for a recess.

The entire board stood and walked out of the room while Liddle continued reading his prepared remarks for three more minutes.

The exchange sparked uproar from parents and a letter to the board from Sen. Irene Aguilar, a Denver Democrat who sponsored legislation this year that requires periodic state audits of Colorado’s 20 community-centered boards that manage state and federal disability funds. The [new law](#) also requires boards to post financial documents on their websites and allow public comment at their meetings.

“I encourage your board to develop alternative strategies to intervene in situations like this where families are having difficulty abiding by your expectations,” Aguilar wrote. “Despite your history with this parent, I found the behavior of the board disrespectful.”

The senator said the board’s treatment of a parent “begs the question” of whether people with intellectual and developmental disabilities “are being treated better.”

The board president, in a three-page letter distributed by e-mail to the parent group, said Liddle continues to bring up the same issues even though Foothills Gateway and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment resolved the neglect case involving Liddle's son in August 2014.

"While the board is willing to listen to new issues of concern with regard to services and supports to the individuals we serve, we feel that this constant focus on incidents that are many years past are neither acceptable nor productive," Haley wrote.

The board allocates 10 minutes at the beginning of its meetings for public comment, and did so prior to the new law. "Each speaker, at the chair's discretion, may speak for up to five minutes," the letter said. Liddle said he was the only person signed up to speak at the Aug. 16 meeting.

Friction between parents and the state's 20 boards have reached a [high point](#) this year after a [Denver city audit](#) of mill levy funds found misspending by Rocky Mountain Human Services, the board that serves Denver County residents with disabilities. The boards determine who is eligible for Medicaid and other public funds and help families arrange therapy, in-home care and group home placement.

Highlands Ranch resident Dawn Caldwell, whose 15-year-old son has severe disabilities, said the video made her sick to her stomach. "How could you treat a human being this way, much less a taxpayer and a customer?" she said. "How are you treating people when there is not a camera?"

"Really the message seems to be if you make waves at any given point in time then they'll do their best to silence or ignore you," said Stacy Warden of Broomfield, whose son has cerebral palsy.

Liddle's 29-year-old son is non-verbal and has the function of a 2-year-old due to spinal meningitis as an infant. In 2014, a state investigation found his son was neglected at a group home and state officials asked Foothills Gateway for a "plan of action" to correct several issues. After staff noticed a rash on Liddle's son, he did not see a doctor for 11 days and then was diagnosed with shingles. The state also found staff was negligent in placing him with an abusive roommate.


During his public comment at the board meeting last week, Liddle was again asking the board for a copy of a "rebuttal letter" it wrote to the state after the investigation. Liddle said the board's attorney told him Foothills Gateway is not required to release the letter.

Liddle plans to return to the board's meeting next month to finish reading his statement.

Jennifer Brown
Denver Post
reporter on
Wednesday,
June 6, 2012.
Cyrus
McCrimmon,
The Denver
Post

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Jennifer Brown is an investigative reporter for The Denver Post, where she has worked since 2005. She has written about the child welfare system, mental health, education and politics. She previously worked for The Associated Press, The Tyler Morning Telegraph in Texas, and the Hungry Horse News in Montana.

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